

National Parks: National Legacy and Civic Involvement

by Janette Lehoux

The U.S. National Parks Service was created in 1916, growing out of a vision of nature shifting from a challenge to be conquered to a great intangible social value, a refuge for the mind, body and soul amidst the chaos of a growing industrial society. From this new attitude came the belief that there were some places that were so beautiful, and so magnificent, that it was worth making the journey to see them oneself, and also to make sure they were preserved and protected for future generations to enjoy. But is interest in America's national parks now on the wane?

In the 18th century, the wilderness was seen as a challenge to be conquered, and it was America's "Manifest Destiny" to spread westward, bringing agriculture, industry, and, progress. Land was valued based on the resources it could provide or the crops it could grow. In the 19th century, the thinking shifted, and artists, naturalists and writers expressed the idea that nature in and of itself was valuable. Influenced by the Romantic Movement in Europe, many American authors and artists depicted the beauty and power of nature. From Henry David Thoreau's accounts of his time living at Walden Pond, to James Fenimore Cooper's romantic views of the American West, more Americans were exposed to these ideas.

In 1832, artist George Catlin, who had lived and painted extensively throughout the American West, was one of the first to advocate that the U.S. federal government create large parks to preserve the natural environment. Catlin's idea, while ahead of its time, would come to the forefront several decades later, after several



In this photo taken on August 27, 2009, busloads of visitors from all over the world, many on land trips from cruise ships, photograph the brilliant autumn colors at Denali National Park, Alaska. Denali rolled out her fabled tundra carpet for visitors in mid-August, sprawling acres of fiery red, orange, green and gold, lush with wild berries and wildlife preparing for winter. (AP Photo/Alaska Journal of Commerce, Margaret Bauman)

major U.S. Government-funded expeditions through Yellowstone, down the Colorado River and into the Grand Canyon, which captured the American public's imagination. As the nation's railway network grew, so too did America's eagerness to see these amazing places.

Thus, as America moved toward the 20th century, conservationists of all stripes were able to capitalize on this public sentiment to push both the local as well as the federal government to take action to ensure that these areas remained protected. It was due to the lobbying efforts of explorers and naturalists, as well as the journalists and editors who were willing to give them a public forum, that Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks were established in 1872 and 1890, respectively.

Because of the growth in environmental activism and conservation organizations in the 20th century, it would seem surprising that the number of visitors to America's national parks began declining in 2004.

There are several theories as to why this was happening. Rising fuel prices certainly reduced family travel budgets, and a volatile economy led many people to opt to spend their vacations at home, or to skip vacations altogether.

Another theory is that the lifestyles of young Americans were also to blame: they were eschewing the outdoors to spend more time online. Spending so much time indoors, either at school, work, or at home, watching TV or playing video games had left

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The American Center

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H O L I D A Y S

July 5: Independence Day
(in lieu of July 4)

A WORD FROM THE CENTER

Dear American Center Bulletin Readers,

As many of you know, Foreign Service life is filled with hellos and goodbyes. For me, it is time to say goodbye again. Thank you for sharing three fantastic years with me during my tenure in Mumbai. There is so much to miss – lovely food from across the country, exciting travel destinations, friendly faces, and interesting still-life settings all over busy Mumbai. I will take with me many, many memories and learning experiences. As I reflect on my time, I still feel like there is so much to learn, know, do about India ... where did the time go? My husband, Kiron, and daughter, Lara, and I will miss the now-familiar sounds and sights of our adopted home as we move on to our next assignment.

I hope you enjoy this month's edition of the Bulletin. It is a nice reminder for me of the offerings of the U.S. as I plan my summer holiday in America. The national parks are a testament to community involvement and ecological preservation. In my new home, New York City, there are many I'll look forward to visiting.

Thank you for being dedicated members of the American Center community, enjoying Span, and attending our events. Remember to become a Facebook fan and visit our Library online! I hope these advances will be a new way for you to keep in touch.

Phir milenge, 


Lynne Gadkowski
Acting Public Affairs Officer

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modern Americans disconnected from nature. In 2006, *The Washington Post* reported the findings of University of Illinois researchers that over 97 percent of the decline in national parks could be blamed on something they termed "videophilia: the new human tendency to focus on sedentary activities involving electronic media."

So, are America's national parks doomed? Will the grandeur of Yellowstone and Yosemite fall into neglect as America's youth stays home playing video games?

University of California biologist Adina Merenlender offers a different perspective. Just because people aren't visiting national parks, it doesn't necessarily mean they love nature any less. "All kinds of people use open spaces in different ways and express their love of nature in different ways ... they may be loving their backyard to death, actually." Still, one may argue,



losing the experience of seeing the parks firsthand may mean losing a generation of advocates for the parks.

According to the National Park Service, however, park attendance increased by three million visitors in 2007, thanks in part, to a centennial initiative, set to commemorate the Park Service's centennial in 2016. In 2009, the National Park Service reported over 285 million visitors, an increase from previous years, but still below the 1987 record of 287.5 million. Perhaps all hope is not lost. Whether there will be a new generation of park visitors who will become the next generation of conservationists, only time will tell.

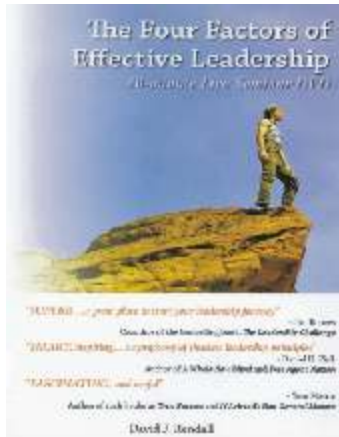
Janette Lehoux works at the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai



In this August 16, 2009, file photo, President Barack Obama, his wife Michelle, and daughters Malia and Sasha, with Interpretive Park Ranger Scott Kraynak look out over Hopi Point as they tour the Grand Canyon in Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona. An independent panel urged Congress to increase spending on national parks by at least \$700 million over the next seven years. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon, FILE)

NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

Recent DVD Additions to the Library



The Four Factors of Effective Leadership

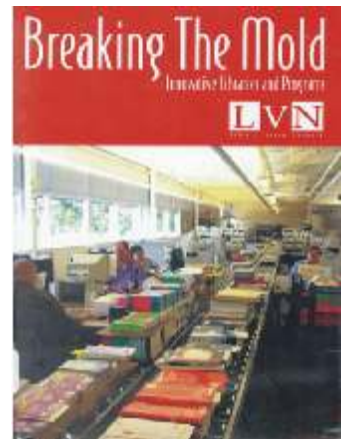
by David J. Rendall
(2006, 80 mins)

In this seminar, the author uses stories of famous leaders and infamous failures, to illustrate the importance of the four factors: Influence, Integrity, Inspiration, and Improvement. These factors are contrasted with the pitfalls of ineffective leadership: Power, Position, Popularity, and Personality.

Breaking the Mold: Innovative Libraries and Programs

Library Video Network
(2007, 25 mins)

This DVD offers tips from the innovative services offered by the institutions profiled in the video. From the audiovisual catalog of Hong Kong Public Libraries to the Columbus Metropolitan Library's speedy 48-hour technical services turnaround, it illustrates some cutting-edge ideas and programs that will put any library on the road to success.



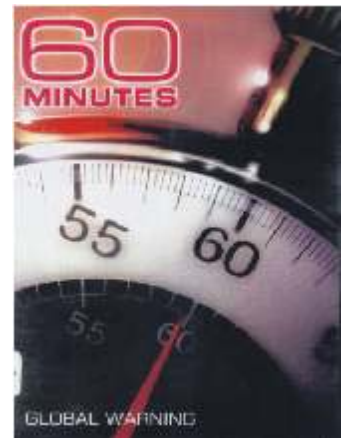
Hot Off the Press: Inside a Daily Newspaper

Cambridge Educational
(2006, 26 mins)

This video takes viewers behind the scenes of a large daily newspaper, exploring in detail how staff members fulfill their writing, illustration, and assembly duties, and how the paper-based periodical has adapted to high-tech documentation, communication, and delivery methods.

Global Warning
CBS Broadcasting Inc.
(2006, 60 mins)

Are our worst fears about global warming coming true? A visit to the Arctic uncovers evidence that man is contributing to the warming of the planet with devastating effects – rising seas, stronger hurricanes, and polar bears headed for extinction. Scott Pelley reports.



Note: Please contact the Circulation Desk at the American Library to view/borrow DVDs.

Ask a Librarian: Please write to the American Library at libref@state.gov for research queries related to information on U.S. international relations, education, law and legislation, English language, and literature.



Discussion led by **Janette Lehoux**

Monday, July 19
American Center Auditorium

6:00 p.m.

Discussion about the history of Las Vegas from its birth as a silver mining town, to the exploration and development of the American Southwest and the rise of casinos, that has made Las Vegas the city it is today.

Janette Lehoux calls Salt Lake City, Utah, home. However, she knows a thing or two about Nevada, the Silver State. She made her first trip to Las Vegas at the tender age of ten. Since then, she has made more trips than she can count, some for less educational purposes than others. Aside from Utah, Janette has lived in Southern California and North Carolina as a student, served in the Peace Corps in Albania, worked and studied in Germany, and Baltimore, Maryland, before joining the Foreign Service in 2009.



Workers at Mount Rainier National Park in Washington state install solar panels on the roof of the park's Emergency Operations Center on June 12, 2009. Aided by federal stimulus dollars, officials at parks across the country are trying to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by "greening" their own operations. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

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Robyn Remeika and Rizwana Sayed

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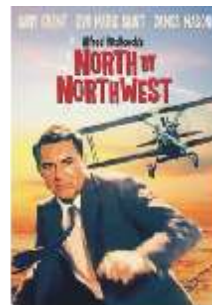
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American Center Auditorium
3:00 and 6:00 p.m.

Friday, July 9

North by Northwest
(1959, 136 mins)

Ad executive Cary Grant finds himself chased by criminals, framed for murder, sharing a sleeper berth with Eva Marie Saint, dusted by a crop plane, and on top of Mount Rushmore in Hitchcock's gem of thrills and mystery. James Mason, Leo G. Carroll, and Martin Landau costar.



Friday, July 23

Into the Wild
(2007, 147mins)

Christopher McCandless (Emile Hirsch) leaves his middle-class existence in pursuit of freedom from relationships and obligation. Giving up his home, family, and all possessions but the few he carries on his back, he embarks on a journey through America. His travels lead him on a path of self-discovery, to examine and appreciate the world around him and to reflect on his troubled childhood.



In this photo taken on July 16, 2009, high school students snorkel in Ross Lake in North Cascades National Park, Washington. In the remote wilderness of northwest Washington, some 20 high school students from around the country have spent the past month camping, hiking and canoeing their way through one of its most untouched national parks. (AP Photo/Shannon Dininny)

Admission to American Center programs, restricted to persons over 14, unless otherwise specified, is on a first-come, first-served basis. The auditorium doors will open 30 minutes before the start of the program.